

## Message Text

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ACTION AF-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SCS-06 CA-01 L-03 CIAE-00 COME-00  
DODE-00 DOTE-00 EB-08 FMC-01 INR-07 NSAE-00 CG-00  
DLOS-09 OES-07 /053 W  
-----018265 121615Z /53

R 121430Z DEC 77

FM AMEMBASSY COTONOU

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 0265

INFO MEMBASSY LAGOS 3262

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4E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: CASC

SUBJ: COTONOU PORT DIFFICULTIES - BENNETT VS. HAMZA: BENNETT  
ARRESTED

REF: A. STATE 290451 B. COTONOU 1850

ON THURSDAY, DEC 8, MR. BENNETT APPEARED AT THE EMBASSY AND TALKED ABOUT HIS SITUATION WITH THE EMBASSY ACTING ECON OFFICER. MR. BENNETT EXPLAINED THAT ALL OF HIS DIFFICULTIES IN BENIN RESULTED FROM THE DUPLICITIES OF HIS PARTNER, MR. HAMZA, OF THE SEVEN SEAS SHIPPING COMPANY. HE BELIEVED THAT HE HAD RESOLVED ALL OUTSTANDING PROBLEMS AND THAT THE BENINESE WERE SO HAPPY TO HAVE THE INCREASED SHIPPING BACK TO BENIN THAT HE (BENNETT) WOULD HAVE NO PROBLEMS WITH BENINESE AUTHORITIES.

2. ON SATURDAY, DEC 10, AT ABOUT 1:30 PM A REPRESENTATIVE OF MR. BENNETT APPEARED AT THE DOOR OF THE EMBASSY ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICER'S RESIDENCE AND SAID THAT AT APPROX ONE HOUR EARLIER THREE ARMED, UNIFORMED MILITARY POLICE AND THREE BENINESE CIVILIANS WHO REFUSED TO IDENTIFY THEMSELVES, HAD ARRESTED MR. BENNETT AND HAD TAKEN HIM AWAY TO AN UNDISCLOSED LOCATION. MR. BENNETT HAD BEEN ABLE TO COMMUNICATE WITH HIS LAWYER BEFORE HE WAS ARRESTED.

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3. ON SUNDAY, DECEMBER 11, THE EMBASSY OFFICER MANAGED TO FIND MR. BENNETT AT THE COMMISSARIAT CENTRALE. BENNETT WAS BEING HELD IN A POLICE COMPOUND IN A LARGE ROOM WITH SEVERAL OTHER DETAINEES, NO BEDS, AND NO FOOD. EMBASSY OFFICER WAS GRANTED ACCESS TO BENNETT WITHOUT ANY DIFFICULTIES. BENNETT'S PASSPORT HAD BEEN TAKEN AWAY BY COMPOUND AUTHORITIES, AND HIS INTER-

NATIONAL DRIVERS LICENSE AND HEALTH CARD HAD BEEN TAKEN AWAY ALSO BY TWO UNIDENTIFIED CIVILIANS WHO CAME TO THE COMPOUND LATE SATURDAY AFTERNOON AND QUESTIONED BENNETT. OTHERWISE, HE HAD BEEN WELL TREATED, HOWEVER, HE HAD NOT BEEN TOLD WHY HE HAD BEEN IMPRISONED.

4. BENNETT THEORIZES THAT HIS NIGERIAN PARTNER BRIBED SOME LOCAL AUTHORITIES TO PUT HIM IN JAIL AND THAT IT WOULD BE ONLY A SHORT TIME BEFORE HE WOULD GET OUT. IN FACT, HIS BENINESE PARTNER, GABRIEL HOUNWANOU, HOPED TO MEET WITH PRESIDENT KEREKOU AT 1400 HOURS SUNDAY, DEC 11, BUT THIS MEETING DID NOT MATERIALIZEIX AS OF NOON MONDAY, DEC 12, BENNETT IS STILL UNDER DETENTION. EMBASSY IS CAREFULLY FOLLOWING CASE, AND WILL PRESS CASE WITH FOREIGN MINISTRY IF BENNETT OWN INITIATIVES FAIL. AT PRESENT TIME BENNETT PREFERS HANDLE CASE HIMSELF.

5. FYI: THERE ARE TWO FRENCHMEN IN THE COMPOUND WITH BENNETT WHO HAD BEEN ARRESTED FOR APPARENTLY NO REASON. VICE CONSUL OFFERED TO INFORM THE FRENCH CONSUL OF THEIR IMPRISONMENT, BUT THEY DECLINED THE OFFER STATING THAT THEY THOUGHT THEY WOULD BE RELEASED SHORTLY. IN ADDITION, VICE CONSUL SAID THERE WAS A GROUP OF BENINESE DETAINEES WHO HAVE NOT BEEN TOLD WHY THEY WERE UNDER ARREST. BENNETT WILL ATTEMPT TO GET THEIR NAMES, ADDRESSES, ETC., FOR OUR OWN INFORMATION. THOMPSON  
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NNN

## Message Attributes

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**Channel Indicators:** n/a  
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**Review Markings:**  
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